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The Search Continues for William Niven's Buried Cities

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PART 1

When William Niven closed up shop of his archaeological discoveries in Mexico City to move back to the United States, the entire contents of his store was carefully placed in wooden boxes for the trip. Niven had excavated in Guerrero and the Valley of Mexico for three decades and been allowed to keep duplicates of everything he had found. Literally thousands of relics were found by Niven, including the 2600 tablets that were made famous through James Churchward's books.



From 'Children of Mu' (facing page 41)

According to Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods, William Niven's biography, he had an arrangement with the Mexican government that he would give them the best example of any relic, but he was permitted to keep duplicates. Niven donated thousands of relics to the National Museum and rightly felt that he was entitled to maintain possession of his collection. Referencing Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods again, Ramon Mena, head of the archaeological division at the National Museum, estimated that Niven had excavated 40,000 tons of earth and donated more than \$10,000 worth of material to the Museum at no cost to the Mexican government. In addition to the material donated to the Mexican National Museum, he also contributed items to the Peabody Museum. These artifacts are known, however the whereabouts of his collection from his Mexico City storefront remains a mystery.

In the past decade, fellow researchers have approached various Texas institutes of higher learning about his discoveries to no avail. Needless to mention is that they were not the first to search for the artifacts. In Part 2, we'll examine one such earlier attempt.

PART 2

In part 1 it was established that literally thousands of artifacts uncovered by William Niven in Mexico during the late 19th and early 20th century are missing. In November 1974, an official letter from the Mexican government was sent to the Paperback

Library publishers. The [letter](#) asked for information on how they might contact the author of the Mu books so that they might locate the artifacts that Niven had uncovered. Eventually the letter from Guadalupe Rivera Marin reached [Howard Keresy](#), James' nephew and inheritor of the rights to James' books and royalties. The text of the letter held some sense of urgency as barely a month had passed between the first and second letters to Mr. Keresy. Quoting from the [first letter](#) (dated February 3rd) to Howard Keresy:

In this regard, (Niven's discoveries,) we are requesting your invaluable cooperation in order you to furnish us with the data you may have, due to we presume Mr. Churchward knew about the collection of prehispanic pieces Mr. Niven found in Mexico City, so we are very interested in knowing the site where such a collection is an study the possibility to make a visit to. We want to stress the importance that this information represents for us, so your kind attention will be very high appreciated.

The [second letter](#) (dated March 10th) read (in part):

As up to date we have not received your answer, we are sending these few lines to recall to you the importance this information represents for us.

Howard had thankfully written his response to Mr. Marin explaining that he did not have any of the original correspondence between Niven and Churchward, except for a quote from Niven that he included in the return mail.

From the correspondence it is clear that Senor Marin was extremely interested in more information and Howard wrote back at least three times ([one undated](#), [April 9th](#) and [July 23](#), 1975) to deliver the message over the next few months. Keresy made clear in his responses that "maybe the relics were being stored at one of the archaeological collections in Mexico City." Also included in the correspondence was a note bearing the address and telephone number of the Mexican Consulate in New York City. This raised some questions in my mind.

What was so urgent about Niven's discoveries some 40 to 50 years later?

What was Senor Marin's motivation to find the relics?

Did Mr. Marin come to speak with Howard Keresy in the US and what did they talk about if he didn't know anything?

Obviously, a letter to the those in charge in Mexico could clear up the questions, the letters were official and even numbered. In Part 3 we'll continue the story...

PART 3

In parts 1 & 2, we established that the whereabouts of William Niven's collection of Valley of Mexico artifacts is a mystery and that someone in the Mexican government was very urgently interested in learning where those relics were located in 1975.

Obviously, I could not just sit on these letters. Why would a Mexican government official be so concerned half a century and more about where the artifacts were located? Did he actually read the books on Mu and wanted to know more or was this part of an legitimate effort to recover 'stolen' cultural relics?

Casting aside any hint of disparaging the name or activities of William Niven, it is obvious that Niven's widely publicized discoveries in the Valley of Mexico had the support of the Mexican government at the time. Niven's Mexico City storefront selling the relics he recovered and his donations of countless artifacts to the National Museum attest to the fact that he had at least tacit approval of his archaeological efforts.

A quick internet search indicated that this particular agency that sent the letter in 1975 no longer existed. The obvious choice was to contact the Mexican Embassy in Washington DC and ask. The extremely helpful gentleman from the Embassy of Mexico to the United States provided the address of a successor organization in a [return letter](#).

I sent a [letter](#) (in English) to the address of the successor organization. I wanted to be straight to the point - no use in cluttering up a piece of paper with unnecessary words or wasting these folks' time. I had enclosed a copy of the official letter with tracking number. I told them I was writing a book, explained about the original letter and asked

"I am writing to find out if any further information has been discovered concerning the tablets found by William Niven."

I believed that I was straight and to the point, however...

In Part 4 we'll discuss the response.

PART 4

In parts 1 and 2, it was established that the artifacts in William Niven's Mexico City storefront have never been found and that there still is interest in finding them, including a Mexican government official, Guadalupe Rivera Marin.

In part 3, letters to the Mexican Embassy to the United States in Washington DC were discussed as well as letters to the successor organization to Senor Marin's office.

The reply did take a while to arrive. First by email with a scanned copy of the two page letter and a few days later saw the arrival of express package with hard copies.

Now, my Spanish language skills are non-existent and require the use of translator. Since the return letter was in Spanish, I turned to an online tool to perform the task. After the excellent communications with the Mexican Embassy in Washington, I thought for sure that my short and to the point letter (not to mention that the first letters were in English,) that it would be an easy answer.

Rule One must be "It Can't Be Easy" because in the reply, there was no mention of the enclosed original letters from 1974-5. What I got out of the online translation was that they knew I was writing a book and thought I wanted to copy materials for the book about Niven's discoveries. They provided a list of reference material and a [link](#). The letter also mentioned that they did not transfer any rights to the material, that belonged to the Mexican state.

OK - nothing about the correspondence that I had written about and enclosed.

On the good side, there were a few references that perhaps I could use for my upcoming book, *Lifting the Veil on Copies of Stone Tablets Found by William Niven*.

Of the references, it appeared that all referred to the same article/monograph, *A Great Archaeological Discovery: The Ancient Tecpanecs in the Valley of Mexico* by Ramon Mena. Senor Mena was the chief archaeologist of the National Museum in Mexico City while William Niven conducted his digs. Unfortunately, that particular paper had been criticized as some of the figures inside were found to be hoaxes (see *Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods; William Niven's Life of Discovery and Revolution in Mexico and the American Southwest*; Wicks and Harrison; Texas Tech University Press; 1999; pages 205-209.)



Figures deemed to be hoaxes.

The remainder of the references were Spanish language and were I to find them and try to translate, I would still be typing for the next few months.

Unfortunately, the provided [link](#) didn't work either.

So, armed with all this new knowledge, I will embark on a path to uncover the secrets behind the old correspondence, details to follow...